

## That's Christmas to Me by PatchworkMedley

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**Summary:**

Just some Christmas fluff about our favorite teenage mom and his kids.

## **That's Christmas to Me**

“Me next! Me next!”

Steve chuckled deeply to himself as he watched an excited Lucas grabbed grab for a gift on top of the pile sitting next to him.

“What do you mean next? No one’s even started yet!” Mike chimed in. Jane, who was sitting right next to leader of the Party giggled. It was obvious that she had no idea what was going on, but something that Steve had noticed was that that hardly ever mattered.

“Mike’s right. But if you’re really wanting to stick with that statement, I can go first. I’ll take that burden,” Max interjected, a sly smile written on her face. Lucas shot his girlfriend a dirty look, opening his mouth to retort, but was quickly cut off.

“Oh please, we all know I’m the favorite here, I’m definitely going first,” Dustin said with finality. That one statement caused a loud roar of noise to fill the room, voices talking over voices to fight over who would be the first to open their Christmas presents.

A month and a half after the Gate had been closed, things had finally calmed down for the heroes of Hawkins, Indiana. Will had taken a week to recoup, but almost immediately fell into his old routine with his friends and school. Hopper had kept Jane on a strict lockdown directly after the closing of the gate. It took heavy negotiations and a very impassioned Mike to convince the police officer to allow even just one visit. Max and Lucas became official, and though Dustin was still pouty about it, the group was overall happy for them.

And the bond between the Party and their glorified babysitter had only strengthened in that time. Steve had essentially become their big brother, or in Jane’s case, everyone else’s big brother, seeing as the grip that Hopper held over her had prevented any sort of real bonding. Steve was honestly surprised that the Chief had let Jane come to their Christmas party so soon after the Winter Ball.

They had all decided they wanted a night to themselves, just the six of them, to spend time with each other and exchange gifts before

everyone's respective families inevitably claimed them for the holiday season. Seeing as it was the Saturday before Christmas, and Steve's parents were at a Christmas party of their own, this seemed like as good a night as any.

Steve took a quick sip of his hot chocolate and set his mug down on the table beside him. He cleared his throat and raised his hands up. "Okay. OKAY! Guys, settle down!" That seemed to capture the attention of Mike and Max, Dustin and Lucas following suit shortly after. Steve sighed and rubbed his head. "Good. Okay, first off, this one," he said, quickly grabbing Will and pulling him into a headlock, the small boy letting out a yelp in surprise, "is my favorite. He quietly judges you guys with me, it's an unbreakable bond that we share. SECOND, there's really a simple way to solve this."

Dustin rolled his eyes and stared the older boy down. "Yeah, and what's that?"

Steve shot him a look, releasing Will in the process. "Well, for one thing, you're going *last* thanks to your attitude." There were snickers around the room as Dustin dramatically collapsed on the floor and groaned. Steve thought he could faintly hear a 'that's not even remotely fair' being grumbled into the carpet. The older teen smirked and continued. "Everyone else, pick a number between 1-20, and it CAN'T be 11, alright? Make it interesting. Closest goes first, next closest goes second, blah, blah, blah."

He got a couple of shrugs and nods of agreement, and one dramatic pout from his curly-haired friend on the floor. Apparently the pout got at least one sympathetic vote, as Steve heard a soft voice coming from his right. "I can go last, it's no big deal to me," Will said, adding in a shrug of his own to solidify his point.

Steve grinned and grabbed the younger boy again, wrapping him a tight hug. "See? Favorite, right here. You're a saint, kid, don't ever change." Steve hung on a few moments longer, ignoring the fist pounding on his chest and the murmur of 'can't breathe'. The older boy chuckled and finally released Will, the latter rubbing his arm, but with a small smile ghosting his lips. "So, last and next to last are established. The rest of you, pick a number."

"Dude, Will said he would go *last*, why am I still going after him?" Dustin whined.

Steve snorted. "Because you're greedy and in need of a lesson in patience." He reached down and ruffled Dustin's hair to show that he was *mostly* kidding. The older boy looked around the room. "Alright, I've given you assholes enough time. Lucas, number."

"Five."

"Okay, Max?"

"Six." She looked smugly to Lucas, who just glared at her. Steve chuckled and moved on.

"Mike?"

"Thirteen."

"Okay, and finally, Jane. Pick a number. That's not eleven. Because that's just a little too predictable and frankly boring." Mike shot him a look, but Jane just smirked at him.

"Twelve." Steve snorted. Jane grinned and shrugged. "Not eleven," she said matter-of-factly.

Steve grinned back and nodded. "Cheeky, I like it. Well, seeing how the number *was* eleven, Jane, you're first. Then Mike, then Max, and finally Lucas." He saw the looks of protest bubbling up in everyone's face and held up a hand. "Okay, I never said that *I* couldn't pick eleven. Besides, we've been saying it so much, how else was I supposed to pick another number?" Before anyone could say anything else, he pointed at Jane. "You're up, kid. And remember, each of you has to open my gift last."

Jane nodded and gingerly picked up the first gift that had been sitting at her feet. She glanced up nervously, looking unsure. But with a quick explanation from Mike, she eagerly tore the wrapping paper from her first gift. Steve settled back into his seat, grabbing his hot chocolate with a soft smile on his lips.

Soon enough, almost all of her gifts had been unwrapped. There were

several VHS tapes of popular movies and a couple of books that Dustin and Lucas collaborated on ("If you're going to be part of the real world soon, we've gotta get you caught up on nerd culture!" Lucas had exclaimed.). From Max, she had gotten several hair accessories, ranging from head bands to barrettes to ponytail holders ("I don't really know how to use these either, but I figure we can learn together!" Max had explained, and had received a very cautious smile in return). Will had gone a simpler route, getting her a coloring book and a small starter pack of crayons ("I figured it would give you something to do while you're in the cabin. It's nice, coloring," Will said, smiling). And finally, a blushing Mike had presented her with a necklace that had a small silver rainbow pendant on hanging on the chain.

"It's just something pretty you can wear, and you can wear it with anything, really! And you can think of me, when you wear it." Someone in the room coughed while everyone else just grinned. Mike's blush deepened. "Us! You can think of us."

Jane giggled and examined the necklace again, her eyes locking on the clasp at the top. After a few fumbles, she finally just presented it back to Mike. "Help?"

Mike laughed shakily and nodded, taking the necklace and unclasping it. He placed it around Jane's neck and clasped it in the back, before reaching around and straightening it in the front. "See? Perfect."

Jane smiled at him. "Pretty?"

Mike smiled back and nodded, laughing to himself. "Yeah, very pretty."

There was a small groan emitted from the floor in front of Steve. "Okay, we get it, you're both adorable. Can we move on?" Dustin interjected, earning a round of stony looks and a smack on the back of the head from Steve.

Steve looked up and back at Jane. "Ignore him, it's basically the easiest option you have. It's really pretty, yeah," he said, motioning to the necklace. "And thankfully, it will go with almost anything that

I have in this box.” He reached behind him and grabbed one of the five wrapped boxes sitting next to him on the side of the couch. He passed it to Will, who passed it along until it finally reached its destination. “It’s nothing too fancy, and Nancy helped me out with most of it,” he watched her peel back the wrapping paper and take off the lid to the box, “but this gives you at least a few more options to your wardrobe than just flannels, jeans, and your favorite leather jacket.”

Jane pulled out a nice blue, button-down blouse and a simple blue sweater. Lastly, she pulled out a deep blue floral patterned sundress that had black buttons down the front stopping at the midsection, short sleeves and a hem that would reach almost to the knee. Jane looked up at Steve with a small smile on her face. “Pretty or bitchin’?”

Steve laughed. “In its current state, probably just pretty. But Nancy has more for you and I’m 95% sure she has full plans to take you through the fashion world and help you find your style. You could probably find something that’s pretty bitchin’.”

Jane grinned and nodded in satisfaction. “Pretty bitchin’.” She looked around the room and her face softened. “Thank you. All of you. I didn’t get anything for you guys, though.”

Lucas shrugged. “That’s okay. It would’ve been a miracle with the lockdown you’ve been under.

Jane giggled and nodded. She looked down at her gifts and back up. “I’ve heard ‘home’ a lot the past few weeks,” she said quietly and let her smile widen a bit more. “Hopper feels like home. But so does this.”

He saw Will shift out of the corner of his eye. “That’s because it is. We, and Hopper, and everyone; we’re family. We’re home,” the smaller boy said.

“Yeah, you don’t wander into tunnels filled with Demodogs for just anyone,” Dustin chimed in with a grin, and everyone couldn’t help but laugh with him.

Steve chuckled. "Okay, if I knew this was going to get this sentimental, I would've made Jane go last. Mike, let's go!"

Mike would go home that night with the newest edition of Dungeons and Dragons, courtesy of Dustin and Lucas, who were eager to get started on a new campaign and a starter skateboard from Max, who only smirked at the disapproving look Mike shot her. Will and Steve actually teamed up for their gift to the Wheeler teen. Will had drawn a collage of all the things that had reminded him of their friendship. The entire D&D party characters, dice (two die rolled on a seven), candy, swing sets, the ghost from Ghostbusters and even the darker stuff like the Mind Flayer and what he could gather the Demogorgon looked like. Then, Steve had taken that and gotten it transferred to the front of a bound journal. Mike had been touched, and remained transfixed on the empty pages that he let fan out in front of him.

Max had a much smaller take-away from the night, but the sentiment behind her gift was all that mattered. Instead of them all getting something separate for their red headed friend, they all chipped in to make her her own Ghostbusters outfit after learning that she did in fact actually think the movie was cool. She snorted.

"There aren't any girl Ghostbusters, though"

Mike rolled his eyes, but grinned. "There is now. Welcome to the Party, asshole."

Max flipped him off and grinned back. "Thanks. This is admittedly pretty cool."

Steve nodded. "Yeah, it is." He paused and cleared his throat. "So where's mine?" All eyes turned on him and he shrunk back in his seat. "I mean, Ghostbusters is lame, but if this is like some sort of initiation or symbolic thing, I'd like to be included."

Dustin scoffed in surprise. "That's why you don't have one. We know you think the movie's lame. You're in though, I'm not sure why you're doubting that."

"It would just be nice to be included, that's all," Steve sniffed, looking at Mike out of the corner of his eye.

“Are you—“ Mike started, but then sighed. “Welcome to the Party, asshole.” Mike turned to Jane. “Do I need to say it to you too?” She just smiled and shook her head. Mike sighed and shook his head. “At least you’re normal.”

Steve grinned. “Thank you. Lucas, go.”

Lucas rolled his eyes and started on his pile. From Mike and Will, he received a game for his Atari. To everyone’s relief, Max had already given Lucas his present from her. The group wasn’t really sure they could handle two bouts of couple-ness in one night. From Dustin, he received a pack of different colored bandanas. Lucas eyed his friend who just shrugged.

“Camo can be cool, but I thought you could use a little variety. Spice up your life.”

Steve chuckled and grabbed Lucas’s gift from the side of the couch and tossed it to him. Lucas caught it and his eyes bulged.

“How did you throw this so easily? It’s so heavy!”

“Well, kids, puberty will happen soon, and your muscles will come in at some point. Just open it,” the older boy smirked. Lucas shot him a look and obeyed, tearing open the wrapping paper to reveal a book about special ops in Vietnam. Steve chimed, “You seem so interested in your dad’s war stuff, that I thought you might like to actually learn more about it.”

Lucas nodded and started flicking through the pages. “This is actually really cool.” He looked up and smiled. “Thanks, man.”

Steve shot him a thumbs up and turned to Will. “Your turn, kid.”

Will nodded and silently started opening his first gift. After a few minutes, all sorts of art supplies were spread out all around him, and Will was wearing a giant smile. Markers, more crayons, stacks of paper, templates and more were being stared down by the smallest member of the party. Steve grinned and reached behind him and grabbed the last present.

“But wait, there’s more!”



Will laughed and grabbed the present in front of him and opened it eagerly. Inside was a set of 12 acrylic paints, brushes and an acrylic pad. "Woah..." Will muttered under his breath, picking up one of the brushes to examine it.

Steve smiled. "It gives you a new medium, if nothing else. I may not know a lot about art, but I do know that there are some pretty badass paintings out there, and I have a feeling you'll make some of your own some day."

Will smiled brightly at him. He put the brush back in its place and launched himself at the older boy, wrapping him in a big hug. "Wow, thank you so much, seriously, this is awesome!"

Steve laughed and lightly pushed him away. "Yeah, yeah, yeah. I call dibs on the first portrait though. I'm entrusting you to really capture my essence."

There was a collective groan in the room. "Yeah, and then we can put it over the fireplace. Just like you've always wanted, right Steve?" Dustin quipped.

Steve flicked him on the ear. "Just open your presents, will ya?"

"You don't have to tell me twice," Dustin grinned before tearing off the wrapping paper on his first gift. As it turned out, Lucas's gift was just as silly as Dustin's was for him: a box of Oreos and a couple of bags of candy. Max had also chipped in a few bags of candy herself, with a card thanking him for being one of the first ones to reach out to her when she had first moved to town. Like before, Mike and Will had chipped in to buy Dustin a new game for *his* Atari, The Gremlins title that had been released to accompany the movie, which had quickly become one of Dustin's favorites. "Very nice haul, guys, thank you," he said with a toothy grin.

"You're not done just yet," Steve said as he rose from the couch. The Party watched as the older teen walked from the room, returning a few moments later with a cage grasped firmly in his hands. He stood tall and commanding, staring down at Dustin sternly. "In this cage, is a turtle. Not just any turtle. A Yertle turtle. I expect you to treat this turtle well." He bent down to set the cage on the floor next to a

gaping Dustin. As he rose back up, he cracked. "And for the love of god, don't give up his cage to an alien slug, okay?" The room around him burst into laughter as Dustin scrambled up to give Steve a hug.

"I won't, I promise. I will treat Horton much better, in memory of our dear departed Yertle."

Steve laughed and awkwardly hugged the younger boy back. "Man, what is it with you and Dr. Seuss."

Dustin chuckled and pulled back. "It's a long story. Anyways, thank you. I had missed having a reptile in the house."

The older boy chuckled back. "At least this one can't eat your cat." He clapped his hands together and started walking back towards the kitchen. "So who's hungry? I have some mean steaks in here ready to go."

Lucas scoffed. "Where do you think you're going? You haven't gotten your gift yet."

Steve stopped and turned around with a confused expression on his face. "I didn't see you guys come in with anything...I just assumed--"

Dustin smirked. "You assumed wrong, get back here."

Steve slowly walked back into the room as Will got up and moved to grab something from behind the couch. He couldn't tell what it was at first, it looked like just a poster of some kind. But then Will turned it around, and all the eyes in the room fell on him. Steve's mouth fell open.

It was another drawing from Will, but it was off all of them. The four boys were portrayed along the bottom in their Ghostbusters outfits, with their Proton Packs all pointed outwards in a defensive stance. The remain three were stationed behind them, blow up just a little bit more, with Steve in the middle, Jane to his right, and Max on his left. Jane's hand was out stretched, and Max was standing with a metal red bat poised out in front of her. And Steve was standing in the middle, with his bat slung over his shoulder and his sunglasses over his eyes. In the background was the Mindflayer, splayed out in its

entity in the sky, and the ground in front of the four boys was covered with Demodog bodies.

Steve whistled. “Shit, kid, why didn’t you give me this for Mike’s journal,” he choked out, not really talking to anyone in particular.

Will chuckled. “So, you like it?”

Steve smiled and nodded, walking forward to take it in his hands in order to examine it better. “It’s the best damn crayon creation I’ve ever seen. And you all pitched in for this?”

Dustin nodded. “Will did the majority of the heavy lifting, but it was a collaborative effort.”

“Yeah, we got to pick what poses we were doing and what we wore, things like that,” Lucas chimed in.

“One night on the phone, El even got to throw in her two cents to the best of her ability,” Mike said. Steve glanced at Jane, who bashfully nodded her head.

Steve stood there speechless for a moment and shook his head. “Wow. Just wow. I don’t know what to say. Except, obviously scratch that Ghostbuster uniform bullshit from earlier, damn.” He cleared his throat. “Thank you. This means a lot.”

He looked around at the smiles around him and gave one of his own. He turned quickly and started walking towards his room. “I’m going to go put this up real quick. I’ll be right back.”

“Hurry up, I’m starving!” Lucas called after him, a round of laughter following.

Steve grinned as he took the steps two at a time.

Jane was right.

This did feel like home.

**Author's Note:**

I'm a day late but oh well! I had this stirring in my mind and just had to get it out there. I tried to keep everything as true to the time as I could!

If it feels rushed, it's because it was. Writing around the holidays is tough!

Happy Holidays!